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POSTAL Life

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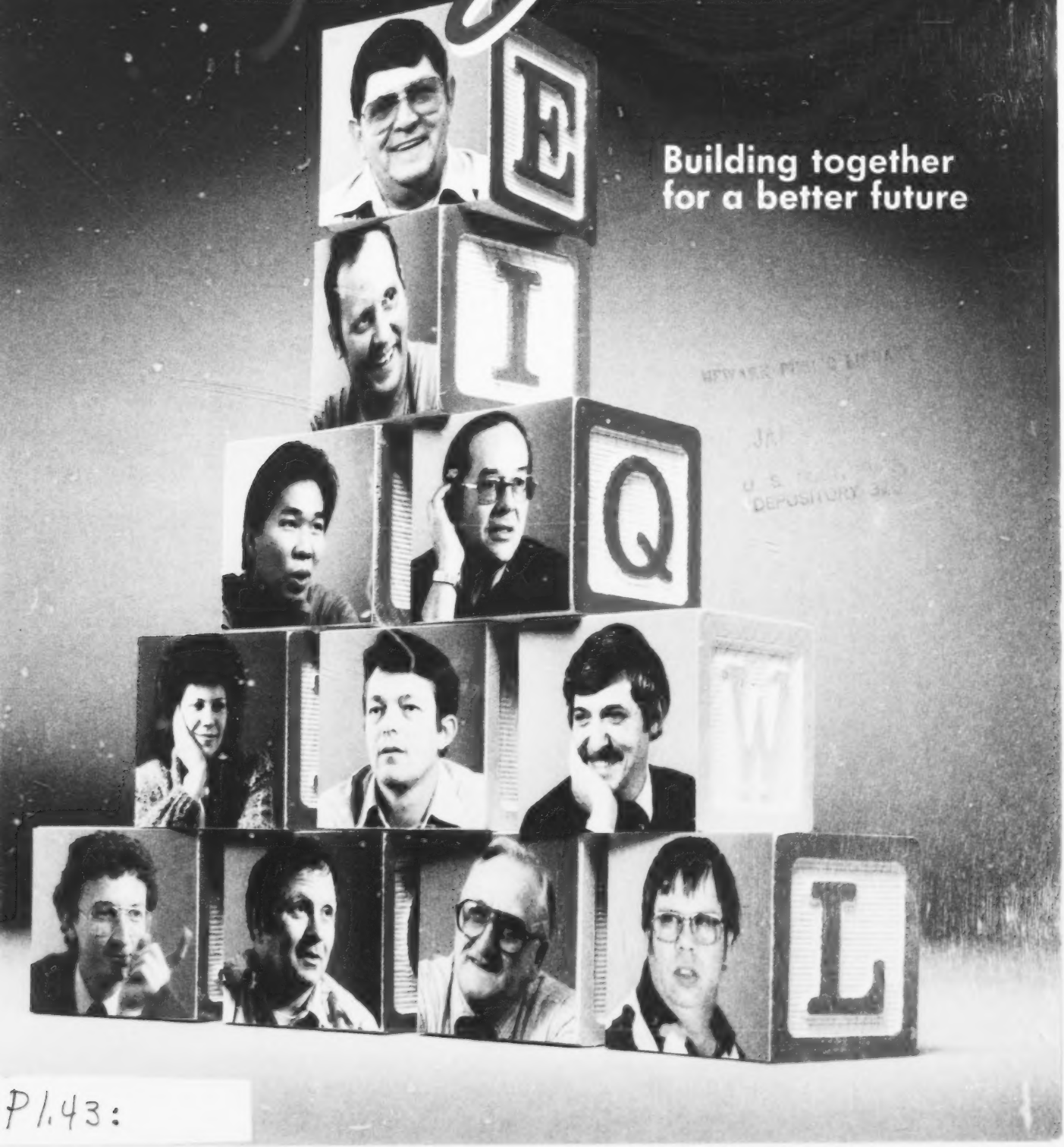


Building together for a better future

P1.43:

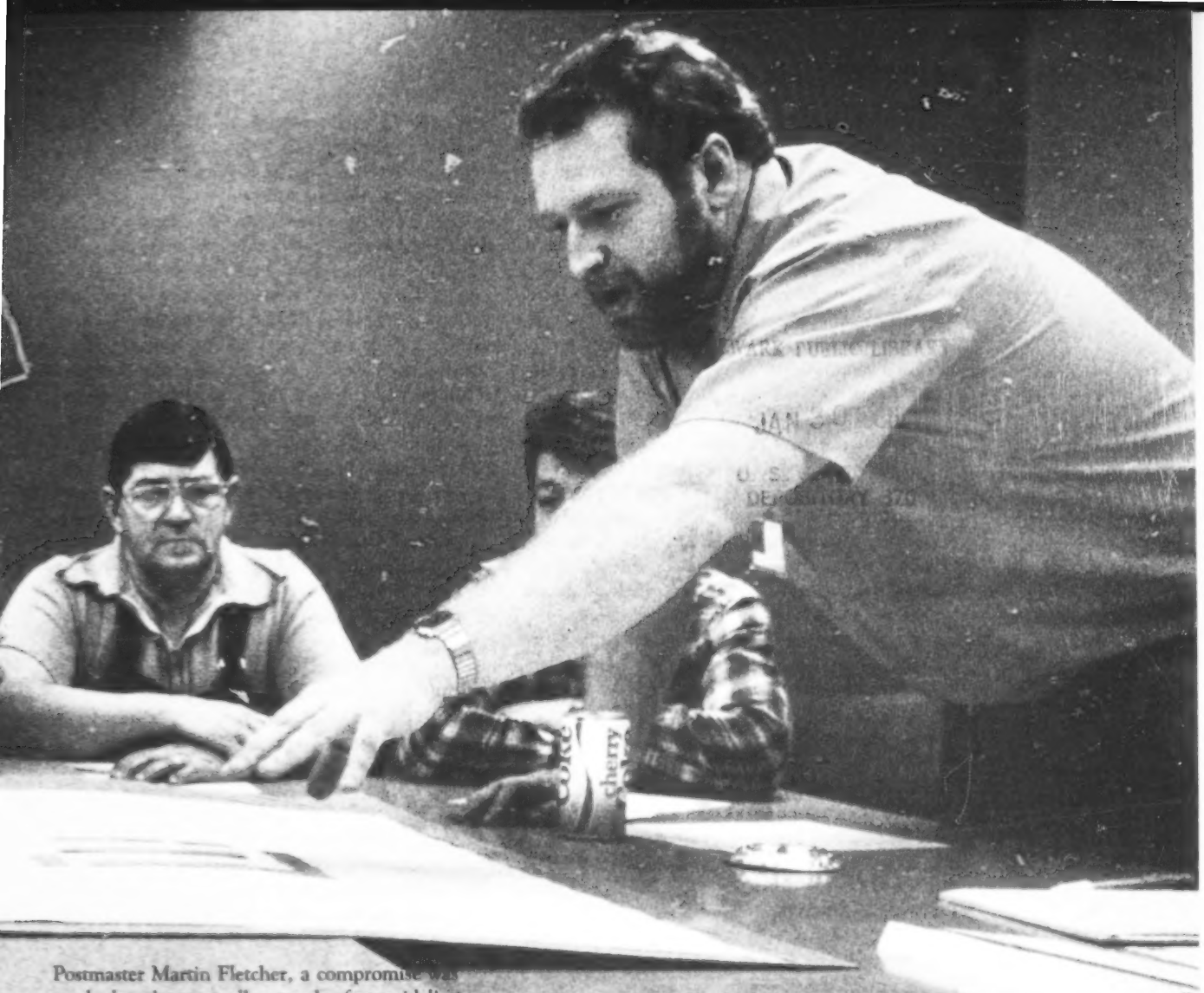
EI/QWL:

The times they are a changin'

At the end of his shift, Ben Horn, a Tour 2 mail handler at the Lancaster, PA, Management Sectional Center, used to pile empty all-purpose carts and other equipment against the loading dock wall. Recently in an EI/QWL quality circle meeting he met with his counterpart on Tour 3—who had to unstack the pile of carts when he started work each day. "Until we met and talked, I didn't even know that he had a problem and I was causing it," says Horn, a local union official. "But once we started discussing the situation, we found a way to solve the difficulty. Now we're both happier because someone asked our opinion about how to do our jobs better. We feel like we're part of a team that's working together."

For nine years, Carr B. Marks, a rural carrier from the Orrtanna, PA, Post Office, had to "deadhead" 5 1/2 miles—backtrack—because of an unpaved mountain road. In a recent workteam meeting of Adams County rural carriers, he asked his managers to see how they might help alleviate this situation. Orrtanna Postmaster Robert Robinson and MSC safety director Steve Gosnell inspected the switchback road in question, met with Orrtanna township officials and had the problem solved within a matter of days. The upshot was a safer route, more efficient mail delivery and better service to postal customers. "We had a good working relationship in this office, and I didn't want to risk jeopardizing it by making a big issue of the road conditions," says Marks. "But the workteam gave me a risk-free forum to talk about this problem."

Michael Dukeman and several other letter carriers in the Wyomissing Station of the Reading, PA, Post Office wondered why they couldn't wear headphones while casing their mail each morning. After the workteam discussed safety concerns with



Pat McCabe

Postmaster Martin Fletcher, a compromise was reached under mutually agreed safety guidelines. "That showed us that management was willing to be flexible," says Dukeman. "I can't begin to tell you how this little thing really helped morale around here."

A new way

These and similar success stories are the result of a new way of doing business at the management sectional center and associate offices in Lancaster, PA, where three unions, the National Association of Letter Carriers, the Mail Handlers and National Rural Letter Carrier Association joined with local management to improve their shared working life through employee involvement/quality of working life (EI/QWL).

Set in the picturesque Pennsylvania Dutch Country, Lancaster's ties with the past are as strong and visible as its large Amish population. A bedrock of community trust is regularly manifested here in neighborly acts such as barn raisings and potluck suppers.

Still, some supervisors and employees were skeptical when Postmaster/Sectional Center Manager Jack Duchesne announced plans last year to build on that trust by implementing EI/QWL throughout Lancaster postal installations.

It was an ambitious effort. No other MSC in the country had attempted to initiate the process simultaneously with mail handlers, letter carriers and rural carriers. (The American Postal Workers Union, which represents the clerk craft, decided not to participate in EI/QWL.) But those who realized the potential of EI/QWL believed that the possible rewards far outweighed the risks and costs involved.

"I like my job and look forward to coming to work every day," says Duchesne. "And I would like everyone to feel that way because happy people do a better job. I really believe in EI/QWL. Why do people have to play confrontation games? We try, instead, to reach a consensus. It's surprising how often someone else's opinion starts to make sense

when you stop talking and listen closely."

Getting started

The logistics of starting the Lancaster EI/QWL process wasn't easy since the MSC encompasses five Susquehanna Valley counties (covering more than 4,000 square miles) and includes 207 offices with nearly 3,100 employees. Even the seemingly simple matter of physically getting together required innovative problem-solving.

Starting in January 1985, the first MSC joint steering committee was formed to oversee germination of the EI/QWL seed at Lancaster, and its 12 members learned to become a team. After three days of intensive training in Dallas, they rolled up their sleeves and put theory to the test as the local steering committee "Lancaster-ized" EI/QWL.

"There were some strong personalities involved and reaching a consensus wasn't always easy," recalls Lancaster letter carrier Don Eitnier, a facilitator working with the MSC local steering committee. "But we learned how to work together to develop and protect the process, making sure that no one attempted to subvert it for their own purposes. Everyone wanted to be first and we wanted to include as many people as quickly as we could. But we also wanted to be sure that what we did we did right."

'Reaching a consenus wasn't always easy.'

West York Station letter carriers, Lancaster MSC mail handlers and Adams County rural letter carriers were trained last spring and workteams and quality circles began springing up almost immediately. Soon afterward, letter carriers from the Wyomissing Station of the Reading Post Office and Berks County rural letter carriers became involved. September saw the Pottsville letter carriers and Schuykill County rural carriers swell the EI/QWL ranks. One month later, Lancaster's letter carriers came aboard. Now, there are nearly 40 work groups meeting regularly.

The MSC joint steering committees also wanted to make sure that local managers and supervisors were ready for these EI/QWL-energized employees and scheduled a training course to explain EI/QWL and participatory management.

Changing philosophy

Last March more than 170 supervisors and postmasters from Lancaster and its associate offices gathered together one Sunday for a five-hour seminar on EI/QWL. All decided that the seminar was important enough to come in on their day off. (FLSA non-exempt employees were paid for attending.)

"We emphasized that we were trying to change our management philosophy," says Bob Kreider, manager of the Postal Employee Development Center at Lancaster. "We tried to convey to our managers the importance of opening their minds and taking advantage of all the employee resources around them, delegating more than they have in the past, being more innovative, learning to listen more and starting to deal with craft employees more on an equal basis."

The eventual success of EI/QWL in any postal facility depends on employees and managers deciding to take personal responsibility for making it work. But essential to its success is the presence of a catalyst, someone trusted and respected by managers and craft employees alike, who can help implement the process. Known as facilitators or coordinators, these employees try to help get speedy answers to workteam questions and requests. The answers aren't always what the workteams want to hear, but no one pulls any punches and the feedback is positive and frank. Facilitators monitor their progress and keep the MSC joint steering committee members abreast of the direction of various group activities.

Don Eitnier, a letter carrier for 30 years and NALC Branch president for 14 years, is one of the facilitators. He's respected by postal managers and employees alike because of his track record of fairness and responsibility. He's now one of the catalysts in the development of the delicate chemistry between carriers and their supervisors that ultimately will determine the success or failure of EI/QWL. Gene Lowe, a delivery supervisor from the York Post Office, serves as another NALC facilitator.

"What we do is based on mutual trust,"he says. "It's important that everyone on the workteams realize that we're working for them. A facilitator's role is to share information about EI/QWL and then assist each work group in its pursuing its own agenda."

Rural carriers talk

Rural carriers—who drive their own cars, wear no uniforms, and often work as their office's sole delivery person—might be considered the most independent craft employees in the Postal Service. Introducing EI/QWL into their individualistic work routine was an especially challenging problem for facilitator Roy Thomas, a rural carrier who has delivered a route in Gettysburg for 10 years. Finding a meeting site and time that was acceptable to everyone involved was the first challenge. Rural routes and their offices are located many miles from each other so the logistics of starting workteams required some innovative thinking and compromise. Darwin Kerper, supervisor at the Reading Post Office and the management facilitator for the NRLCA process, worked closely with Thomas on establishing the workteams and shares his enthusiasm for EI/QWL.

"Our workteams meet every Tuesday night at 6:30 for an hour. The Postal Service pays mileage and gives compensatory leave to comply with FLSA

requirements," explains Thomas. "Many rural letter carriers work alone (except for their postmasters), so these weekly meetings give them an opportunity to listen to each other's common work problems and offer possible solutions. This gives rural carriers a support mechanism they never had before QWL."

Improving the environment

Mail handler Ken Tremble and LSM supervisor Dana Edsel, EI/QWL coordinators, work with John Burke, a Lancaster MSC mail handler and a member of the joint steering committee, on making the process work for mail handlers. Burke, by nature a devil's advocate, concedes that EI/QWL has achieved some successes, with the prospect of more in the future. But he's just as quick to call steering committee members to task for not following through on a matter.

"I'm not ready to jump up and down and say that EI/QWL has solved all our problems, because it hasn't and probably won't," says Burke. "But maybe we've really had a new beginning here. We're talking to each other as equals. Management and labor honestly seem to be trying to work together here, some for the first time. We've still got a very long way to go, but at least there's a vehicle now for us to use so we can improve the workplace environment."

Listen and learn

There's been some management converts to EI/QWL, too. Sean Lacey, acting MSC director of Customer Services, was concerned initially about whether management was sincere in its support and whether some employees would attempt to exploit the process. Now he's the first to admit that his initial impression of EI/QWL was off the mark.

"We were worried at first about getting people motivated to join workteams, but that's hardly been the case," Lacey explains. "People are taking the ball and running with it here. They're cranking out as many things for me to act upon as I can handle. But how can I complain when so many employees are taking such an active, personal interest in doing their jobs better?

"The structured processes are the formal parts of EI/QWL. There's also an informal process where we bounce ideas off each other, act as sounding boards or send up trial balloons without fear of being shot down.

"That might be the best product of EI/QWL—how much better we communicate," Lacey concludes. "We've been able to surface and discuss lots of problems here. We've solved many of them, but even where we haven't reached a consensus we've listened and learned. Postal managers and employees may never see things the same way on every issue, but at least now we look each other in the eye, talk to each other as equals and agree to disagree sometimes."

His words recall those of another Pennsylvania postal employee—Benjamin Franklin. More than 200 years ago Franklin wrote:

"Tell me, I'll forget

"Show me, I'll remember

"Involve me, I'll understand."

Maybe there really is nothing new under the sun!

Mike Fanning

Pat McCabe

EI/QWL rural carriers, clockwise from top left, Helen Heitmueller, Carr Marks, Steve Golya, Rodney Wolf, Katherine Geiman, Larry Hankey and Dennis Hankey, hold their weekly workteam meeting.

Pictured on pages 2-3, mail handler quality circle members thrash out their problems; from left to right, Lynn Mathiat, Roy Miessl, Eliseo Cruz, Robert Raab, Greg Oster and Ken Trimble.

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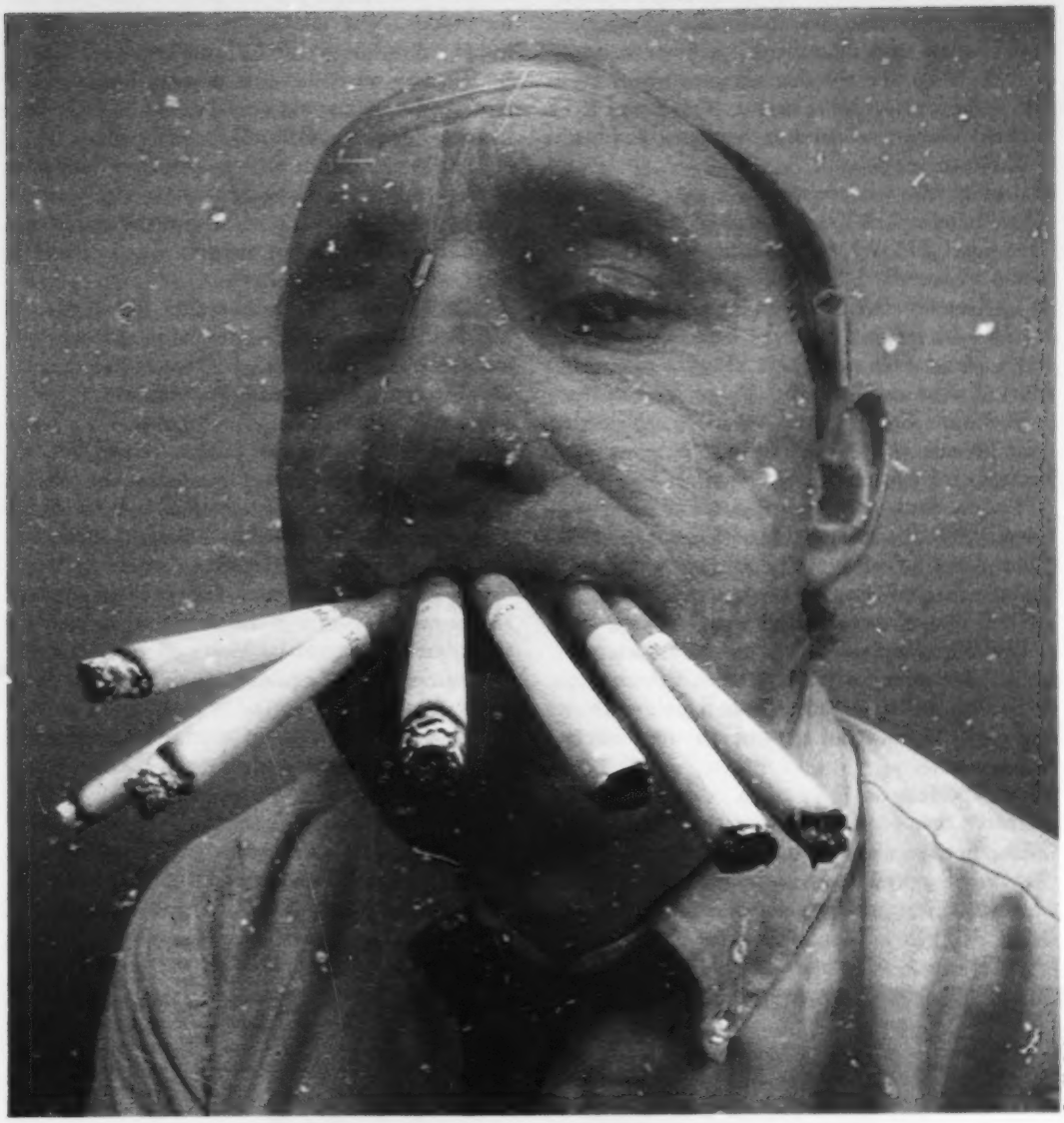


Pat McCabe

BREATHING CAN BE HABIT FORMING

When I was growing up, smoking wasn't considered hazardous to your health—it was sinful. As soon as I found out it was sinful, I went out and bought myself a pack of cigarettes.

Mark Twain said he made it a rule never to smoke more than one cigar at a time. In 20 years of smoking, I smoked three to four packs of cigarettes, one at a time, every day. Conservatively I smoked about 400,000 of those little tubes of tobacco or about $10,000 worth of them.

Over the years I thought about quitting. I heard rumors of people who had quit but never met anyone who had succeeded. Some neighbors told me that a guy down the street had quit, and as soon as he sobered up they would find out how he did it. A friend of mine quit and said it was no problem. Quitting, he said, didn't bother him one bit, and if I didn't believe him, he'd punch my lights out. So I marked giving up smoking as a lost cause and made up my mind just to enjoy cigarettes down to the last puff.

When you've smoked 400,000 cigarettes in your life, you have very few reasons, in your mind at least, to quit. Price doesn't matter. It makes no difference that the smoke irritates others. You shrug off health warnings with "you've got to die from something." The smell of smoke in your clothes, house and car doesn't matter to you because you can't smell it. The slight cough becomes second nature. You don't read anything bad about smoking because you've made up your mind it's not bad.

I was convinced that quitting smoking was impossible.

But more than a year ago, I quit. It wasn't the hardest thing I've ever done, but it ranks up there in the top two—right next to getting on a plane to Viet Nam. My reason for quitting was simple. When I went out to get the newspaper, I would be out of breath. Now, I've been out of money from time to time, and I've been out of gas. But one thing is for sure, I don't want to run out of breath—just yet.

I'm telling you all of this so you'll understand that if I can quit smoking, anyone can quit. When you do kick the habit, or if you're thinking about quitting, here are a few things you should know:

1. Quit for yourself. This is very important because you'll find very little support once you've quit smoking. The same people who complained about your smoking now will complain about your aftershave or cologne. So quit for yourself. Only you can get yourself through the really hard times.

2. Have a valid reason to quit. Mine was that I like to breathe. Everytime I want a cigarette, I take a deep breath instead.

3. Use a crutch if necessary. Mine was nicotine gum. It comes only through prescription and costs about $20 for a two-week supply, or 60 pieces of gum. It gets you through that two- or three-week period of physical withdrawal everyone dreads.

4. Once you quit, you may gain some weight. This is like saying the mail volume may increase at Christmas. My caloric intake went from that of a Woody Allen to a sumo wrestler's. When I quit smoking, my life's ambition was to weigh 175. Now my ambition is still to weigh 175. I went from 160 to 190, passing 175 sometime in my sleep. Now my weight has settled down ... down around my belt line.

Excessive eating, of course, is just one more habit to break. Food tastes better and eating can easily take the place of smoking if you let it. Start an exercise program. Watch your in-between-meal snacks. Be aware of the pitfalls of jumping from one bad habit to another.

5. Your sense of smell will return in style. In other words, you can smell a goat burp in Cambodia. I never realized, for instance, that many of my customers are hog farmers. And you will find that the same people who complained about your smoking have bad breath.

6. Your legs will ache for awhile. I don't know why this is. Perhaps it's the blood returning to them after so long an absence.

7. Your breath won't smell like smoke any more. It will smell like some strange mixture of garlic and dirty socks. Buy some mouthwash.

8. You will save a considerable amount of money but will blow it on something equally as foolish.

9. You will gain a certain measure of freedom. You can leave the house without those three packs of cigarettes, matches and lighters. You can walk into a room without searching for ashtrays or smoking sections.

10. You may live longer. But, as a friend said, who wants to live longer if you can't smoke?

As you can tell, I have mixed feelings about breaking the habit. One tends to remember the good times in any relationship and when you smoke three to four packs a day, the relationship with tobacco becomes a love affair. To quit smoking you have to be able to adjust to changes in everything you do: eating, drinking, working, sleeping, associating with friends and being around other smokers.

On one hand, you give up the benefits of smoking that only confirmed smokers know—the emotionally satisfying aspects that seem to reduce nervousness and stress.

But on the other hand, you'll wake up feeling better. You won't cough. Your sense of taste and smell will improve dramatically and food will taste better. And, I've noticed that those lobs I once couldn't get to on the tennis court ... well, I still can't reach them, but I feel better trying. There are many other benefits, but in general your overall health will improve.

Doctors, of course, will tell you all sorts of things about smoking ... that it's the single most dangerous risk factor of heart attacks, lung cancer and emphysema. Of course, we all know this can't happen to us. But the sad fact is that it can and will happen to us.

If you can quit smoking, do it now. The first month will be extremely hard and even a year later you will find yourself wanting a cigarette. But suddenly one day you'll walk outside after a spring shower and realize how fond of breathing you've become.

Believe me, breathing is something you can grow accustomed to.■

Warren Dixon, Jr.

The author is the postmaster of Julian, NC, where he is overcoming his love of smoking through athletics ("I climb walls").

Quit for yourself. The same people who complained about your smoking will complain about your aftershave.

ZIP + 4 SUPERHE

Burel Wolf knows everyone in the farming community of Lancaster, TX, most of them by their first names. No one is a stranger to this gregarious, west Texan, ex-farmer turned postal employee.

Wolf began his postal career as a carrier, later became a distribution/window clerk and today is a window service technician. He figures he has processed, distributed and delivered mail for just about everybody in Lancaster since he started at the post office there 18 years ago.

Wolf is committed to service. "I still believe that service is the only thing we have to sell," he says, "and I try to provide it to all our customers." So when he heard the Postal Service's goal was to have most First-Class business mail carrying the ZIP + 4 Code by 1989, Wolf threw himself into the project. He began talking ZIP + 4 to the business leaders of Lancaster, in person and on the phone. And when they didn't call him back, he called them again.

"I think all employees should tell customers about ZIP + 4," he says. "We can't sit back and leave it to the customer service representatives. "ZIP + 4 is too important for us all not to take part. I figure this is the way we'll be doing business from now on. ZIP + 4 benefits both the Postal Service and the customer and that's what I tell them. I let customers know they can clean up their mailing lists, save on postage and help hold off future rate increases. And everybody likes the idea of saving money."

Kim Teague, Dallas customer service representative, says "Out of 40 associate offices assigned to my territory, no one has been more instrumental in generating interest in ZIP + 4 than Burel Wolf. The first time I talked to him on the phone, he was really enthusiastic about lining up ZIP + 4 customers. I suggested he set up some appointments, and I'd spend time with him and his customers. He called back later in the day with appointments already scheduled, and when I asked how many, I was astounded when he said six—all in one day."

Wolf's tenacity paid off. Of 11 companies he contacted, six submitted mailing lists for ZIP + 4 coding and committed themselves to using the expanded code. "He's been going non-stop," Teague says. "He has contacted banks, the Lancaster School District, the city government, a tool products manufacturer, Farmers Insurance, and many others.

"By the time he's done, Burel Wolf will have the whole town of Lancaster using ZIP + 4."

Following through

"You have to put your heart into selling ZIP + 4," says Velma Harris, senior customer service representative in Portland, OR. "And you have to be patient. Each account can take a year or more to complete. You have to lead the customer through many different steps and follow through on a thousand details."

Harris, a petite woman with a ready smile, knows what she's talking about. She has sold some of the largest accounts in the Pacific Northwest, including Pacific Northwest Bell, with an annual volume of 20 million First-Class pieces.

It helped that she already had established a rapport with most of these companies. From previous dealings, they had come to rely on her and trust her judgment about postal services. So when ZIP + 4 codes came on line, she identified potential accounts and began calling on them. Her most effective selling point was the savings that her customers would gain from the discount for using ZIP + 4 codes, but she also showed them how they would clean up their mailing lists.

Her first step in talking customers into adopting ZIP + 4 codes is to do an analysis of conversion costs versus the expected savings. "ZIP + 4 is not just a matter of adding four extra digits," she says.

Burrell

ROS

Around the country, employees are finding innovative ways to sell the ZIP Code add-on.

"These companies have to buy new software, which can cost up to $30,000; some even have to reorganize their mailrooms. They want to know in cold, hard cash just how long it will take them to recoup their investment."

One of Harris' biggest accounts, Portland General Electric, which services 550,000 customers in the Greater Portland area and has an annual mail volume of six million First-Class pieces, spent $20,000 for ZIP + 4 conversion, but according to Mailroom Supervisor Dennis Lahmars, "We anticipated a complete return on our investment in less than six months, but it actually turned out to be four months."

Harris convinced Lahmars and his company that ZIP + 4 coding was the way for them to go. "She told us we would clean up our addresses and help the Postal Service maintain more stable postage rates," he says. "She wouldn't take no for an answer. She made us see just how much good ZIP + 4 could do for us.

"We're proud to be one of the first Pacific Northwest utility companies to begin using ZIP + 4," adds Lahmars, "and we expect to see other utilities following shortly."

Selling ZIP + 4 can be a long and time-consum-

ing process, but, according to Harris, it's very exciting. "When a company is converting to ZIP+4, I literally camp on their doorstep," she says. "I attend meetings with their data processing people, finance people and mailroom people. I give them information about software vendors, help train their people and advise them every step of the way. Lots of questions can arise, and I have to be ready for every one of them.

"But it is so exciting when that first ZIP+4 mailing hits the dock and you know you have won a hard-earned friendship with that mailer. You know all your work has been worth it when you see a company go from negative feelings about ZIP+4 to getting behind it 100 percent. When I can make a company see what's good for the Postal Service is also good for them, that's reward enough for me."

Little things mean a lot

As Burel Wolf showed, you don't have to work in a big urban area to sell ZIP+4, and the companies don't have to be part of the Fortune 500.

Shields

Zagame

Postmaster P. W. Burrell of Rockmart, GA, a small rural community with no major mailers, successfully sold the city government on using ZIP+4. The city of Rockmart just completed converting 1,966 pieces to Presort ZIP+4 coded mail. "I always try to give first class service to our customers," says Burrell, "so I told the city officials if they wanted to be ready for tomorrow, they should convert to ZIP+4 today. I told them that their postage savings might be small now, but the way Rockmart is growing, a few years down the road those savings could really mount up."

Burrell says it helped that the city was forward-looking enough to realize that their dividends from ZIP+4 coding would grow along with the town. His argument convinced City Manager Ronald Morgan: "In a small town like Rockmart, money is tight and even a small savings is important to the people."

Wide open spaces

Lots of people and cars come to mind when most of us think of California. But there are wide open spaces in this most-populous state—like the deserts of Southern California or the Sierra Nevada in Northern California with their rugged grandeur. Redding, CA, surrounded by beautiful mountains and lakes, is in the heart of these wide open spaces—a great place to visit or live, but not an easy place to sell ZIP+4.

But that doesn't stop Joan Wyman, CSR at the Redding Post Office, who covers thousands of miles in servicing her territory, which runs all the way to the Oregon border. In her area, only five mailers have an annual volume of 100,000 First-Class pieces or more. "Most of my mailers are really small," she says. "So it takes a special effort to sell ZIP+4 to them."

And sell to them she does. She has 12 active accounts manually converting their mailing lists to ZIP+4 codes, and they represent a variety of small enterprises. She has a garbage service, a credit union, a lumber company, a county welfare department and a small utility. Some of these accounts barely have enough mail (250 pieces at one time) to qualify for the discount.

"These companies don't save as much on postage as the big companies. They simply don't have the volume," she says. "So I tell them that ZIP+4 saves numerous handlings in mail processing, making delivery more efficient, and that appeals to them."

Training for ZIP+4

Joe Zagame coordinates a special program in Racine, WI, that trains associate office postmasters how to sell ZIP+4 codes. "Everyone in the Postal Service should be a salesperson," he says. "We should all know about our products and how to sell them."

He teaches AO postmasters about postal products and gives them techniques for contacting customers and selling to them. Earlier this year, the training was aimed at teaching employees about selling Express Mail, and it was a great success. Offices without Express Mail sales before the training now have several accounts.

The focus of the current training class is on ZIP + 4, and Zagame, who is postmaster of Racine, feels that it will be equally successful. "The first step," he says, "is to teach postmasters how to analyze their customers for possible ZIP + 4 leads, and then teach them how to contact them."

After the postmaster makes the initial contact, Zagame meets with the customer and the postmaster, along with a CSR, giving them a complete presentation on ZIP + 4. This outlines the program for the customer, and at the same time gives AO postmasters more information about ZIP + 4 codes to help them with future sales and locating leads.

Zagame feels training the AO postmasters is good business. "They know their accounts and can service them close at hand. Customers see their postmasters on a regular basis, so they feel comfortable with them."

This program came about as part of a postal sales program, inaugurated in the Central Region two years ago and designed to give employees sales training. Zagame thinks it's the best program he's been involved in since he joined the Postal Service in 1958. "I think there should be a national program to teach employees how to sell postal products and services when they are first hired," he says. "We have to be more competitive in today's mail market, so all employees must take an interest in telling people what the Postal Service has to offer, and to do that, they need training."

Having foresight

Mellon Bank, United States Steel, Bell Telephone—names that conjur up images of blue chips and board meetings—are just three of the accounts CSR Mary Shields of the Pittsburgh, PA, MSC has won over to ZIP + 4 coding. Bell Telephone has a volume of nearly 22 million First-Class pieces a year; Mellon Bank, 13 million and U.S. Steel, eight million.

Her technique: "First you contact the mail room," she says, "then work your way up through data processing people, finance people, to the company executives who are the decision-makers." But she feels data processing people are the key. Most organizations already have data processing systems, and ZIP + 4 usually means they must buy different equipment or modify their present systems, which can be expensive: "So you have to get the data processing people on your side."

Shields knows the process can be time-consuming. "It takes time to sell the program and time to implement it," she says. And she thinks the cost factor is her biggest selling point. "There is no way a big company can afford to pass up the kinds of savings that ZIP + 4 offers."

It helps if the customer she is dealing with is an innovative company. "Some companies just don't want to make any changes, so it helps when companies have the foresight to see how good ZIP + 4 is for them. One of my most forward-thinking customers is U. S. Steel. They are very much into cost savings and innovations. They even did a film for the Postal Forum promoting ZIP + 4."

Dick Hall, mailroom supervisor at U.S. Steel, believes strongly in ZIP + 4, and with Shields' help, he spent many hours convincing executives that it was the way to go. "They kept asking "'what ifs?'," he says, "and I had to come up with the answers. Believe me, I couldn't have done it without Mary's help."

He says Shields contacted him when ZIP + 4 coding was first announced. "We were dragging our feet," he says, "but Mary kept beating me over the head. She wouldn't let up on how great ZIP + 4 was. Then when the discount was decided on, she was able to convince me we would save money, and then I had concrete evidence to show my company how much we would save. I was able to take four specific projects and show them that from just those four mailings, we would get our conversion money back. And it's worked out. In fact, we are running slightly ahead of recovery costs."

He says Shields also was invaluable when they were implementing ZIP + 4: "She advised us of what to do, how to do it and when to do it. And when we ran a test on our data file, she helped us review it. She was there whenever we needed her."

A big boost

Shields thinks one of the biggest boosts to ZIP + 4 sales came from Postmaster General Paul N. Carlin when he and the Board of Governors released the statement that the Postal Service was committed to ZIP + 4. "Until then, some companies resisted ZIP + 4 because they thought it wouldn't last. They were afraid they would spend money converting their equipment, and then we would abandon the program. After the strong support shown by postal officials, they realized we are committed to ZIP + 4. I know I am personally committed. Selling ZIP + 4 codes is a continual challenge, and I love it. Every day is different."

Whether it's in a major metropolitan area or in the heart of American farmland, and whether it's a window clerk or a customer service representative, ZIP + 4 generates excitement and a sense of commitment throughout the Postal Service, and postal people everywhere are helping our customers help their businesses by using ZIP + 4. ■

Sharon Greene Patton

'Selling ZIP + 4 is a continual challenge.'

PULLING TOGETHER PULLING IT OFF

Fiscal year 1985 was a year of change and challenge for the Postal Service and its people. It was a year that tested—and proved—our professionalism.

Early in the year, obstacles surfaced that seemed to require us to do the impossible: We needed to reverse the downward trend in service performance, especially in the delivery of First-Class and Express Mail, and at the same time reduce expenses servicewide.

We did it! Postal people everywhere pulled together to meet these challenges. By the end of the year, service had been restored to its former high levels, and we had reduced a projected deficit of $750 million to $251 million, bringing us to less than one percent of achieving our break-even target for Fiscal 1985. And in the process, we found innovative ways to improve service and control costs for the current fiscal year.

The figures from the Annual Report of the Postmaster General shown in the charts on these pages tell the story. They demonstrate the tremendous effort and commitment of postal people across the nation.

Volume up again

Volume continued its steady climb in 1985. During the fiscal year we handled an incredible 140 billion pieces of mail, 6.5 percent more than last year, with all classes except fourth registering an increase.

Volume by class of mail:

- First-Class Mail 72 billion
- Second-class mail 10 billion
- Third-class mail 52 billion
- Fourth-class 576 million

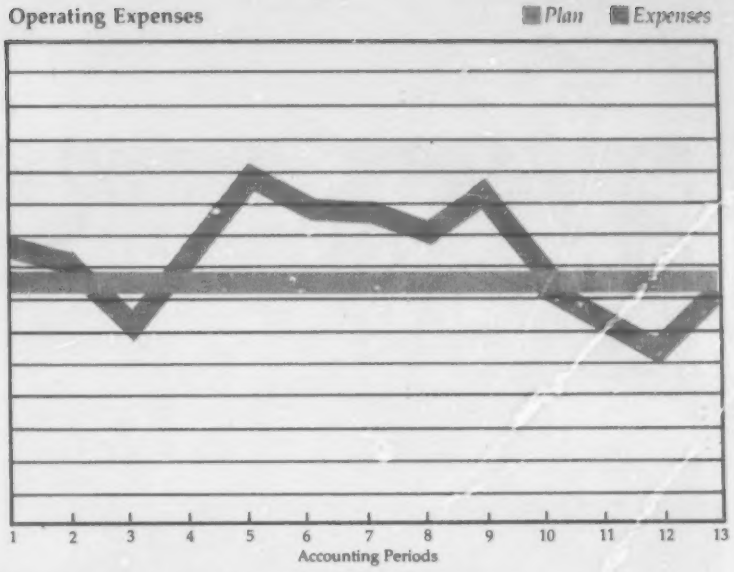
Reversing the trend

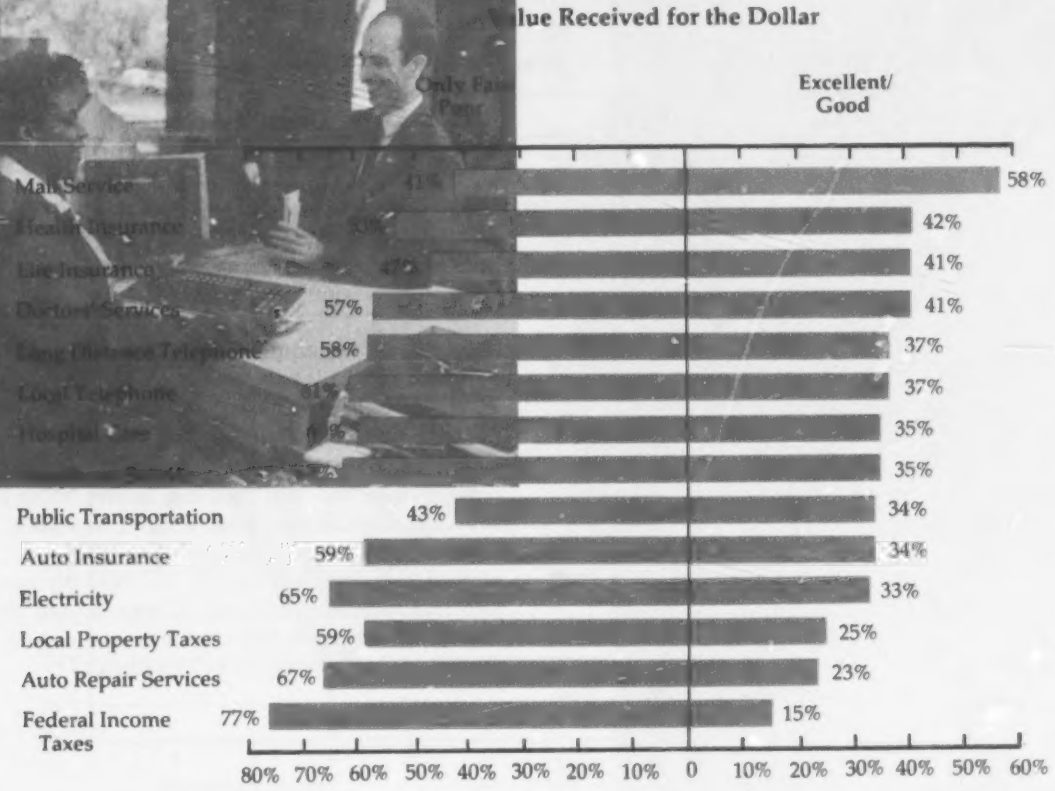
Our financial red ink had many causes: airline deregulation, the merger of second-class mail into the preferential network, inefficiences in our cost control efforts (by Accounting Period 8, operating

expenses were running 3.1 percent over plan and showed no signs of improving). But whatever the causes of our financial woes, postal people were the only ones who could turn things around. And turn it around we did. We successfully implemented a cost containment program, and by the end of Accounting Period 12, we were running 3.1 percent below plan.

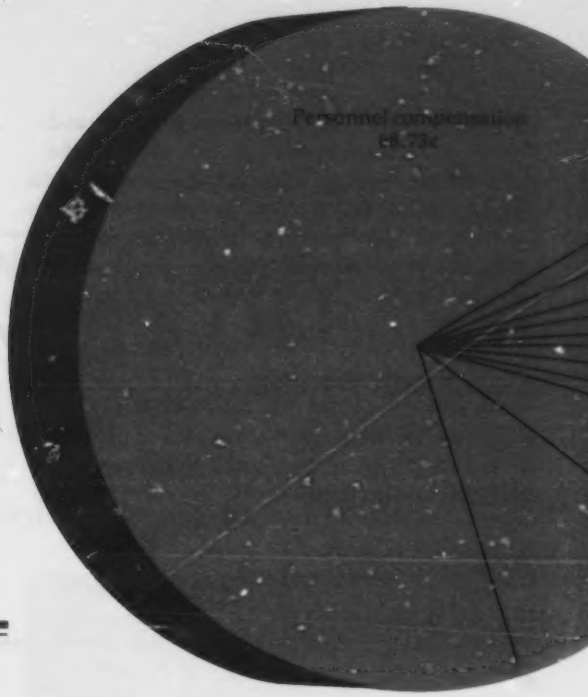
A good value

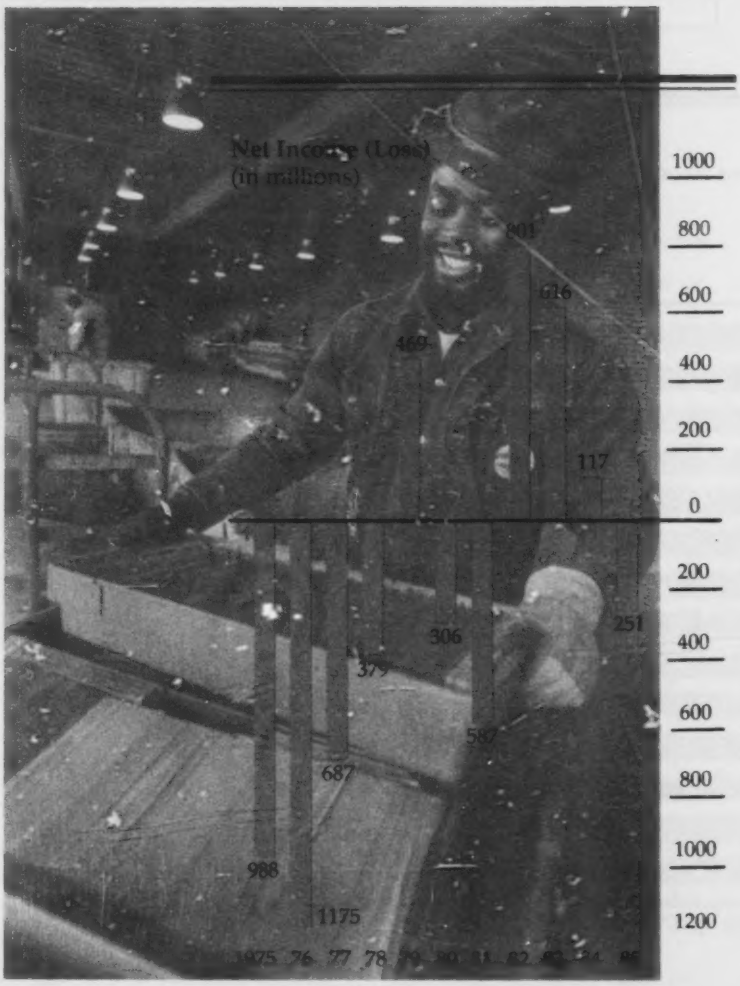
Our customers know that the Postal Service is a good value for their dollar—they said so in a recent Roper Poll. When compared to 12 other services, the Postal Service scored as the best value with the American public.




lue Received for the Dollar
Only Fair/Poor
Excellent/Good
Mail Service 41% 58%
Health Insurance 58% 42%
Life Insurance 41%
Doctors' Services 57% 41%
Long Distance Telephone 58% 37%
Local Telephone 61% 37%
Hospital Care 65% 35%
35%
Public Transportation 43% 34%
Auto Insurance 59% 34%
Electricity 65% 33%
Local Property Taxes 59% 25%
Auto Repair Services 67% 23%
Federal Income Taxes 77% 15%
80% 70% 60% 50% 40% 30% 20% 10% 0 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60%

The above chart is based upon a July 1985 Roper Report.





How we divide up the money

Volume rose, but so did expenses. Here's how we divided our money up in Fiscal Year 1985.

How we're doing overall

Looking back over the last 10 years, we have met and exceeded our break-even point four times, three of them within the last four years.

Service makes a comeback

Service standards had plunged through Accounting Period 4, particularly for second- and third-day stamped mail. Overnight delivery of stamped First-Class Mail, historically strong, dipped to 94 percent, while second- and third-day delivery fell to 74 and 77 percent. But we made a strong comeback, and by the year's end, overnight performance reached 96 percent and second- and third-day performance recovered to 88 and 90 percent. And remember, these service improvements were accomplished while costs were being contained.

Rent, communications and utilities 2.49¢

Other services 2.55¢

Interest on notes and bonds .20¢

Supplies and materials 1.49¢

Printing .24¢

Depreciation and write-offs 1.27¢

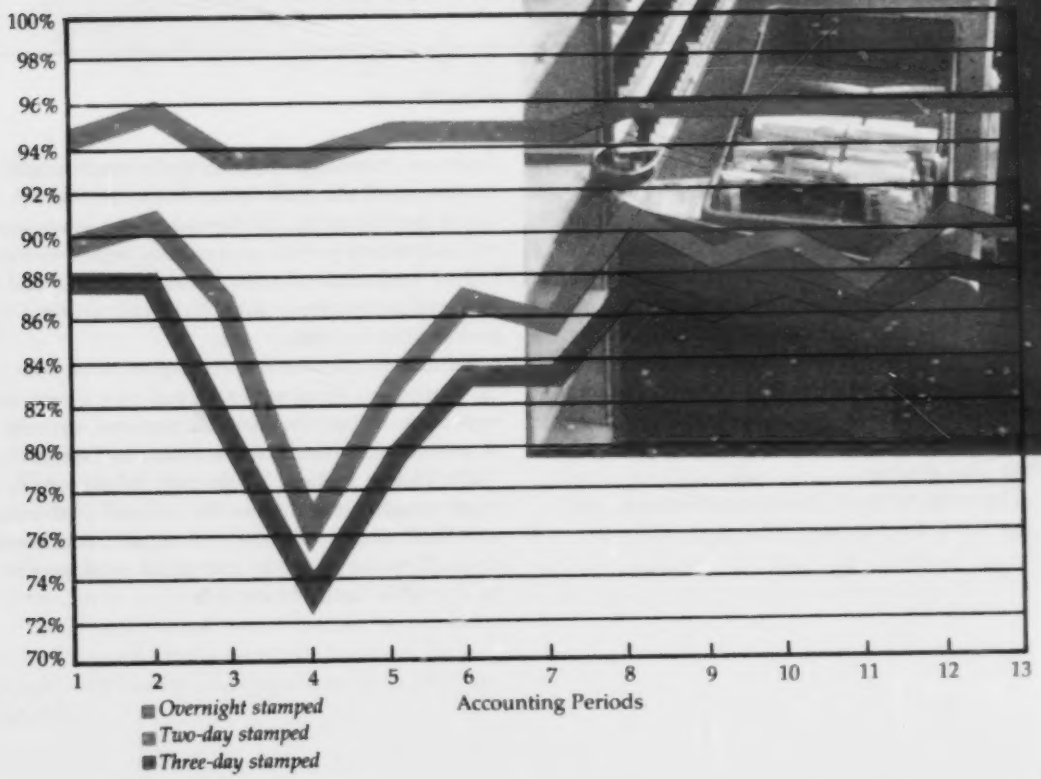
Travel of persons .40¢

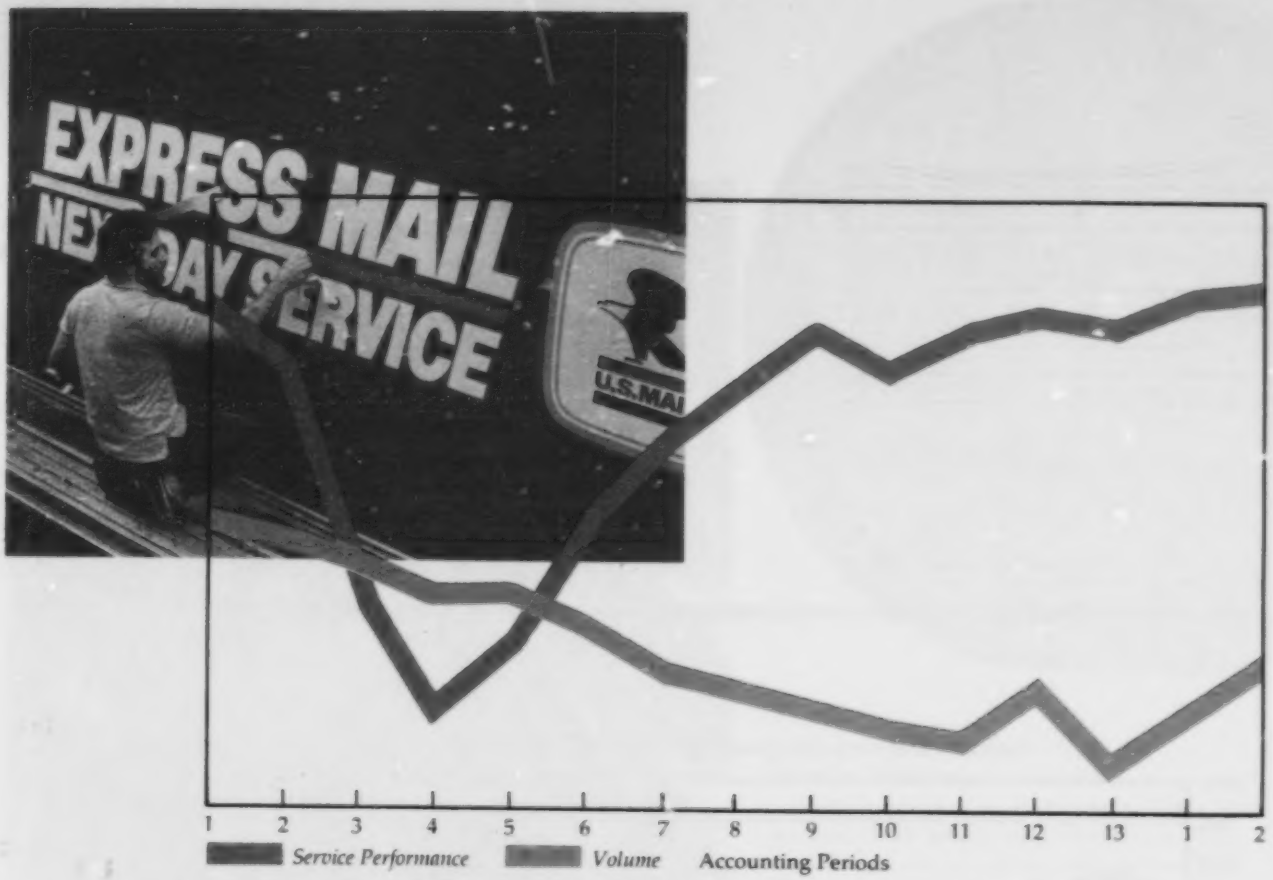
Insurance claims and indemnities .17¢

Transportation 7.99¢

Personnel benefits 14.47¢

National Delivery for Qualified First-Class Mail, FY 1985





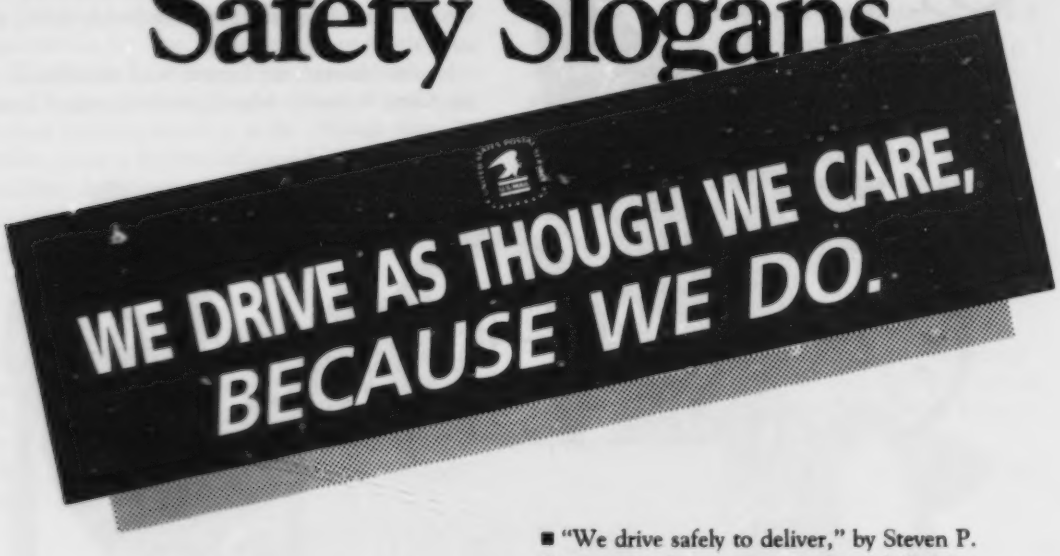
Express Mail faces its toughest challenge

In the first half of the fiscal year, a one-two punch of airline deregulation and extreme weather conditions in the winter of 1984-85 temporarily knocked Express Mail's on-time performance to its lowest level ever. Record cold weather forced airport closings, blocked highways and slowed deliveries, affecting service in almost all parts of the nation. At the same time, as airlines geared up for deregulation, they dropped flights and adjusted routes on short notice, hampering transport of Express Mail shipments.

The rapid rebound in service performance reflects our immediate response to the predicament. By the end of the year, service was better than it was at the beginning. By the end of this year's second accounting period, service had climbed to the highest level achieved since Fiscal Year 1980, and a new goal was set for at least 98-percent on-time performance in 1986.

Customers who began switching to other next-day companies when service dipped were slower to respond to its improvement. At year-end, the rate of growth for volume was the lowest in Express Mail's 15-year history, 3.1 percent. While volume began rising during the first two months of the current fiscal year, it will take a sustained commitment to excellent service on the part of all employees to build on this favorable trend. ■

Winning Safety Slogans



Postal people began sending a safety message to the public last month when the first of the employee-coined safety slogans appeared on the world's largest fleet of delivery vehicles.

"We drive as though we care, because we do," submitted by Gary L. Daum, postmaster in Kent, NY, is the first of six safety slogans that will appear for six-month periods on more than 100,000 postal vehicles.

The five other winning entries, in the order they will appear on USPS-issued vehicle decals are:

- "The driver of this vehicle is asking America to buckle up," by Phillip Younkin, a building custodian in the Tampa, FL, Sectional Center Facility.
- "Please drive safely—we care," by Janice Hardy, a letter carrier in Garden Grove, CA.
- "Buckle up America" (accompanied by a drawing of the Statue of Liberty wearing a seatbelt), by Donald Max Hoezee Jr., a letter carrier in Hudsonville, MI.
- "We drive safely to deliver," by Steven P. Raymond, a letter carrier in Haverhill, MA.
- "Safely delivered" (accompanied by a drawing of a hand placing a letter in a mail box), by R. D. (Dan) Tifft, a letter carrier in Rockledge, FL.

The six winners were chosen from more than 8,000 entries in the Safety Slogan contest announced in the May/June issue of *Postal Life*.

Judging the contest were the Assistant Postmasters General for the Headquarters Departments of Employee Relations, David H. Charters; Delivery Services, Andrew S. Walker; Public & Employee Communications, Mary J. Layton; and John Wargo, Director of the office of Commercial Marketing in the Customer Services Department.

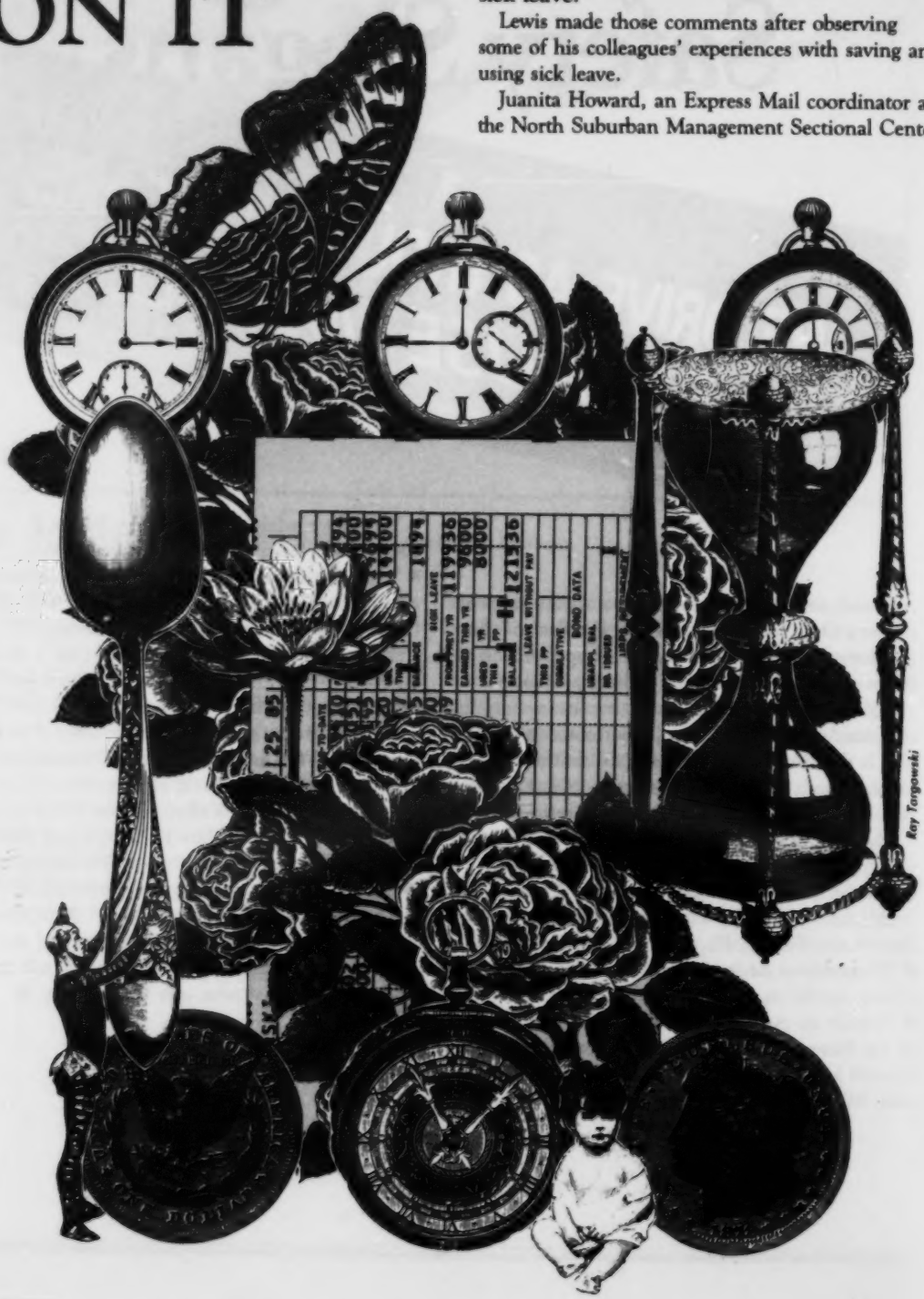
The winners will receive $100 gift certificates to the mail order catalogs of their choice and the satisfaction of knowing that their words will tell the world that postal drivers care about safety. ■

SICK LEAVE: YOU CAN BANK ON IT

"Sick leave, when you're sick, is a blessing; when you're healthy, it can be the same as money in the bank—maybe amounting to $25,000 or even more," says Melvin Lewis, a postal operations specialist at the O'Hare Field AMF in Chicago. "From the day they are hired, postal employees have the means for saving thousands of dollars without touching a penny of their income, just by conserving their sick leave."

Lewis made those comments after observing some of his colleagues' experiences with saving and using sick leave.

Juanita Howard, an Express Mail coordinator at the North Suburban Management Sectional Center,



Ray Torgowski

'I tell myself I'm saving money.'

had accumulated 500 hours of sick leave last July when she entered the hospital for minor surgery. She planned to have the operation during two weeks of annual leave, saving her sick leave "in case there were complications." As it turned out there were complications right away. While being "prepped" for surgery, Howard had a severe asthma attack, her first ever, and was subsequently hospitalized not for two weeks but for two months. During recovery, she cashed in 320 hours of sick leave for regular pay checks amounting to $5,052.31. And she still had 180 hours of sick leave left in her "savings account."

That would have been a pittance, though, compared to the needs of Overton Pryor, a mail processing machine operator at the Chicago Main Post Office. After a lifetime of good health, Overton suddenly developed a heart condition in June 1983. He was incapacitated for 18 months but never missed a pay check. Lewis figures Pryor's yield from his 2,300-hour sick leave investment was $31,634.43.

Most people would consider a six-week illness unusually long. Yet, during three consecutive pay periods in 1985, in the Central Region, more than 600 postal employees used 240 hours of sick leave. "I wonder," says Lewis, "who would have paid the bills for those people if their pay checks stopped when they got sick."

That's what happens to many people in the private sector. If they don't go to work, they don't get paid. But in the Postal Service, even part-time workers earn one hour of sick leave for each unit of 20 hours. Full-time workers earn four hours per biweekly pay period.

Sick leave is such a painless investment. The Postal Service sets it up, does the bookkeeping and pays you a dividend when you retire. For example, if you retire with 32 years' service and you have accumulated 2,080 hours of unused sick leave, you will be credited with another year of service. And if you have less than 2,080 hours of unused sick leave, it will be credited in whole-month increments.

It's also to your advantage to retire with an annual leave balance since the payment for terminal leave will provide you with money while you are waiting for your first annuity check.

Usually, you will receive that annuity payment about six weeks after you retire, but sometimes it's longer, particularly if you wait until the last weeks to submit your retirement paperwork.

"To me the sick leave benefit seems more tangible when I think of it in terms of dollars instead of hours," says Lewis. "Instead of saving sick leave, I tell myself I'm saving money."■

Catherine Courtney

A guide to sick leave

■ **Accrual.** At the end of each pay period, full-time employees are credited with four hours of sick leave; part-time employees earn one hour for each unit of 20 hours worked.

■ Approval. Sick leave cannot be used until it is earned. It may be used for medical, dental or optical examination or treatment if requested on Form 3971 and approved in advance by a supervisor.

In the event of unexpected illness or injury, employees must notify their supervisors of the reason for their absence and its expected duration. Upon return to duty, employees must submit a Form 3971. In some instances they may be required to submit acceptable evidence of incapacity to work. If a supervisor disapproves a sick leave request, the absence may be recorded as annual leave, leave without pay or absent without leave at the discretion of the supervisor.

For absences in excess of three days, employees are required to submit medical documentation or other acceptable evidence of incapacity for work. Failure to do so may result in being charged with LWOP or AWOL.

■ Use. Sick leave was established to insure employees against loss of pay if incapacitated because of illness, injury, pregnancy and confinement and medical examinations or treatment. Though sick leave cannot be used in place of annual leave, annual leave can be substituted for sick leave. Unlike annual leave, there is no limit on the amount of sick leave you may carry over to the next year.■

SHORT STUFF

Hold the pepperoni. When a customer delivered a large political mailing to the San Francisco Post Office, he found that the letters had picked up so much humidity that they now weighed more than an ounce. Since postage for the second ounce would have cost $15,000, the customer had to come up with a quick solution. He took the mailing to a nearby Pizza Hut, borrowed the pizza ovens and dried out the letters. When he brought them back to the post office, sure enough, they weighed in at just under one ounce.

It pays to wear seat belts. As part of its campaign to reduce injuries from motor vehicle accidents, the Postal Service is offering a $10,000 "insurance policy" for accident victims who wear seat belts. The money will be paid to the estate of postal employees who are killed in job-related vehicle accidents while wearing seat belts. The Department of Transportation reports that if every driver and passenger in the United States would wear seat belts, about 17,000 lives would be saved every year. And closer to home—out of the 18 postal employees killed in vehicle accidents in the last three years, 17 were *not* wearing seat belts. Postmaster General Paul N. Carlin has urged all employees to wear seat belts every time they get behind the wheel: "Not simply because it is a requirement of your job," he says, "but because your families and loved ones deserve you alive and whole." So buckle up for safety's sake!

Elvis collecting mail? William F. Cooper of Cross Lanes, WV, has built an 8-foot high, 600-pound concrete statue of Elvis Presley holding a mailbox. Elvis is a prototype for what Cooper hopes will be a long line of celebrity mail collectors. Can King Kong be far behind?

Tony LaPorte, letter carrier from Cicero, IL, was a winner in *Metropolitan Home* magazine's "Shop by Mail" essay contest. The magazine asked its readers to tell why they like to shop by mail, and LaPorte wrote: "I feel like a child at Christmas....As a mailman I get to play Santa Claus throughout the year....Christmas joy can be yours any day of the year—just shop by mail."

No nudes is good news. Weather might not stay carriers from their rounds in Lutz, FL, but nudity is another matter. For nearly a year, mail was not delivered to a 239-unit "clothing optional" condominium community north of Tampa because the tenants could be seen from the mail boxes. The Lutz Post Office wanted a barrier put between the resort and the tenants' mail boxes or the boxes moved to a location outside the resort gates where the mail could be delivered without risking the sensibilities of delivery people. The residents did not want their mail boxes moved, so they finally agreed to the barrier and are once again receiving their mail.

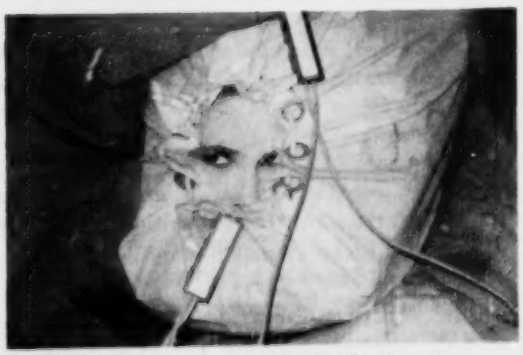
Play it again, Bhutan. Bhutan, a small country north of India, issued a postage stamp last year that was actually a tiny phonograph record that plays the Bhutanese national anthem.

Mark Twain, who was born in 1835, the same year Halley's Comet passed by, predicted that he would die the year that it returned. He was right. He died in 1910, the last time Halley's Comet appeared until the end of last year. To commemorate Twain's birth and death, the 100th anniversary of his novel, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and the return of Halley's Comet, a 36-cent aerogramme was issued in Hannibal, MO, last December.

A Philadelphia, PA, couple recently sent their household goods to Canton, PA, via the Postal Service. After studying their options, they found it was cheaper to mail their 31 boxes, totaling 1,000 pounds, than it was to hire a moving company. The postage came to just over $300, which the couple thought was a bargain.

George Bucsko, a clerk at the Clifton, NJ, Post Office, was the big winner out of 58 finalists from eight states in the eighth annual New Jersey Championship Tomato Weigh-in. Three hundred spectators watched him collect the $1,000 grand prize for his giant 4.57 pound beefsteak tomato, which shattered the contest record of 4.41 pounds. Bucsko, 42, says he has no secrets for growing prize-winning tomatoes other than "years of experience."

It's never too late. Postal employee John E. Armstrong, who postponed going to college for nearly 60 years because he had to work to help support his family, has the honor of being the oldest student to attend Yale University in its 234-year history. Before enrolling at Yale, he received his associate's degree from a community college, earning A's in all his classes. Armstrong, 79, who is now retired and working toward a bachelor's degree in liberal studies under a special Yale program, explains his decision to go back to school, "I felt I needed to keep my mind in good condition."



No, this is not a mail-order bride; it's a magazine cover. ■

Sharon Greene Patton

POSTAL PERSONALITIES

Mushing the Yukon Trail

The Yukon Quest International Sled Dog Race begins at Whitehorse, in the Yukon Territory of Canada and ends 1,000 miles away in Fairbanks, AK. It usually takes the winner between 10 and 14 days to reach the finish line. This year's entry list included a 1980 champion of the annual race from Anchorage to Nome—and a rookie from the Postal Service.

Mushers (those who travel over snow with a dog team) from as far away as Great Britain and the Northeast U. S. pay $500 just to enter the race, and much more for supplies and training expenses. First-time competitors, whose only mushing experience is running traplines, find themselves running against old-timers.

On March 3, Russ Ridlington, clerk-in-charge at the Clear Branch of the Nenana, AK, Post Office, started the Quest with 10 of his 13 dogs and high hopes. The first dog sled team to reach Fairbanks would collect a $15,000 prize.

Though forced to turn back after 130 miles, Ridlington felt the experience was spiritually uplifting. "When you stretch your abilities to the limit, you're bound to grow a little," he says.

Ridlington, 31, who joined the Postal Service two years ago, has lived in Alaska 16 years. He started his dog team three years ago because of the long winter nights. "Nenana, where I live (50 miles from Fairbanks), is a real party town," he says. "Sitting in a bar drinking got to be boring, and I was suffering from a psychological depression due to the prolonged darkness. When I got into mushing, responsibility for the dogs changed everything."

His mushing experience includes two years on the sprint racing circuit and one year of recreational long-distance mushing. He looked forward to following the Yukon trail used at the turn of the century by prospectors on their way to the Alaskan gold fields. At one time, portions of the trail were used by the U. S. Postal Service to deliver mail with dog teams. Ridlington thinks of these dog mushers as "strong, hard working individuals who personify the spirit of today's postal employee."

As luck would have it, two of Ridlington's better dogs showed signs, early in the race, of not being up to par. "Even then," he says, "it took me 14 hours to make up my mind to turn back. It's easy to let your ego force you on instead of taking an objective view. But I had no support crew, and my lead dog had an inflamed wrist that was not responding to aspirin. Fortunately, this route has good roads connecting to frequent checkpoints. I took the dogs home by truck."

Ridlington was disappointed but not devastated. "This was a taste of what the race is like," he says. "When I try again, I won't be overwhelmed." ■

Olè for the USPS

When Agustin (Auggie) Bear reached the age of 22 without becoming a rich and famous matador, he gave up bullfightin, for a more secure career. "I thought I'd better quit before the bull won," he says.

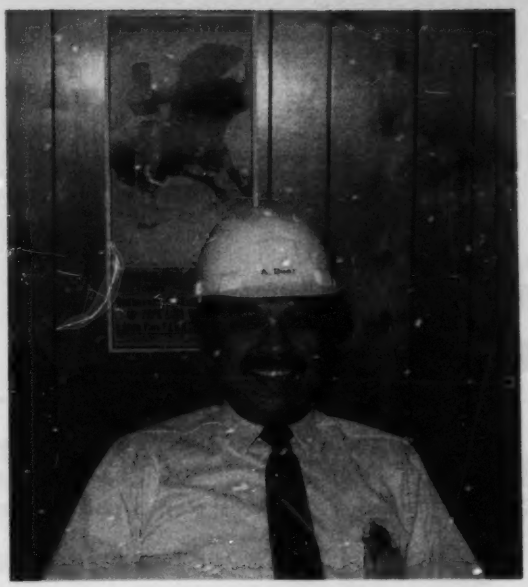
Now a supervisor in the Cincinnati Post Office, Bear began fighting bulls in Salvatierra Guanajuato, Mexico, at age 13. "At that age Mexican children are finished with public school," he explains. "If they want to continue their education, they must come up with quite a lot of money."

Of the two most lucrative fields open to youngsters—boxing and bullfighting—Bear chose the one that appealed most to his sense of showmanship. He also felt the bullring offered him a better chance to make good, since larger numbers of boys were attracted to boxing. But competition among the matadors was still very keen. He joined what is referred to as "the business" following fairs from town to town and basking in the adulation of aficianados. "You have to be careful about enjoying the crowd too much," he says. "With 1,300 pounds of menacing animal heading at you, you must never lose your concentration—always be in charge. Even so, bullfighting is an art, not a sport. I loved the applause."

When Bear was about 20, after several encounters in which he was "tossed around," a bull gored him in the groin and he had to be sewn up. "I kept on for two or three more years," he says, "before deciding that bullfighting was not for me. I had given it my best, but hadn't become a star nor realized my ambition to study engineering. And I couldn't see myself at 50 or so just being a second-rate assistant."

Bear moved to Los Angeles, studied English for four months, then joined the U. S. Army, serving as a paratrooper during the Cuban crisis and later in Viet Nam. While stationed in the middle west he met his future wife, a Kentuckian, and, in 1965, became a U. S. citizen.

A year later he joined the Postal Service at the Main Post Office in Cincinnati. Now supervisor of mechanics, he looks back on his steady advancement with pride. For example, on a test for the position of mail processing equipment supervisor,



he scored an astonishing 99.7 percent.

Bear and his wife live in Grants Lick, KY, and are the parents of four children including a daughter who is studying chemistry at Harvard University. While he remembers the glamour of the cheering crowds with pleasure, he has no regrets. "That was just one part of my life." ■

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POSTAL LIFE

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On our cover: Lancaster, PA, mail handler EI/QWL quality circle members (from left to right, top down), Bob Raab, Dave Collins, Thu Luu, Ken Yeakley, Lynn Mathiat, Greg Oster, Ron Rineer, Dana Edsall, Ken Trimble, Ross Gregg and Butch Myers. Photo by Patrick S. McCabe.